Office of the National Director of Health and Wellbeing

Re: Health and Wellbeing Division Submission - Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport consultation request for the new Statement of Strategy 2017-2019

Introduction

This document is submitted on behalf of the Office of the National Director of Health and Wellbeing. Dr Stephanie O’Keeffe, National Director of Health and Wellbeing and the Division’s SMT welcome this opportunity to provide suggestions in relation to potential content and areas of focus of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport’s next Statement of Strategy.

General Observations

The intention to develop a new Statement of Strategy is very welcome. The aim of this response is to identify where high level objectives of the cross-governmental Healthy Ireland Framework (HI) can potentially be incorporated into, or support, the high level objectives of the new Statement of Strategy 2017 to 2019 and its key performance indicators (see specific feedback below).

Healthy Ireland Goals

- Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life
- Reduce health inequalities
- Protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing
- Create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland

A copy of the Healthy Ireland Framework can be found at the link below along with other information in relation to more recent strategies and plans that are aligned with this overarching Framework and that will help to deliver on its actions overtime etc.

http://www.healthyireland.ie/about/

Healthy Ireland in the Health Services

Information on how the HSE is approaching the implementation of this Framework within the health service can be found at the following link - www.hse.ie/eng/health/hl/hi/
Specific Feedback: Environmental Health Service

(including recommendations in relation to new high level goals, potential Performance Indicators and specific actions for inclusion in new Statement of Strategy)

a) The Statement of Strategy is being formulated within the Government’s Programme for Partnership Government. The Health section of the Programme (section 5,6 and 7) does not specifically mention Healthy Ireland as a Strategic Aim for the Programme but does mention a commitment to Health and Wellbeing.

b) A High Level Goal for the new Statement of Strategy which work towards integrating the achievement of Healthy Ireland goals into the Strategy where appropriate could be to ‘ensure that all Programmes and plans funded and implemented by the Department consider the impacts on the wider determinates (or possible High Level Goals) of health as defined in Healthy Ireland’.

c) If consideration is given to key performance indicators (PIs) for the High Level Goals, then there also is an opportunity for HI input. The key PIs from 2011 to 2014 can be seen at: http://www.dttas.ie/sites/default/files/node/add/content-publication/Statement%20of%20Strategy%202011-2014.PDF page 10 onwards.

Programme for Partnership Government
The following have been identified as relevant to the Dep TTS from the Programme for Partnership Government. The aim of this input is to suggest ways in which HI objectives could be incorporated into the following areas, at a PI or implementation level.

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‘G) Impact Assessment
As part of our smarter regulation agenda, the new Government will step up the use of impact assessments across Government, driven by a new specialised section within the Cabinet Secretariat. The new impact assessment guidelines will have to take account of impacts on rural Ireland as well as other socio-economic factors. Within the new Department of [Regional Development and Rural Affairs], we will task a coordinating unit to work with communities to develop co-operative structures to keep vital local services in place and to retain and develop vibrant local enterprises.’

Recommendation: A High Level Goal could be usefully included that any project or plan includes the assessment of the impact on the wider determinates of health in any impact assessment carried out under the smarter regulation agenda. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of such a high level goal in the new Statement of Strategy.
‘G) €100million Capital Investment in Wild Atlantic Way & Greenways
One of the biggest achievements in revitalising tourism has been the creation of the Wild Atlantic Way. We will seek to set aside €100million in additional capital funding to take the Wild Atlantic Way to the next level, including an Atlantic blueway route, and the Ireland Way, and to invest further in developing a nationwide Greenway network. As part of this additional funding, we will double the funding available for the Rural Walks Scheme from €2million to €4million to increase the number of walks covered from 40 to 80. We will also direct Fáilte Ireland to develop the ‘Ireland’s Lakelands’ brand as a separate proposition to sit alongside the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland’s Ancient East. To assist with sustainability of tourist accommodation and small tourism ventures, a support scheme will be introduced for businesses operating along these routes.’

Recommendation: A key PI for investment of the capital funding identified above is the integration with the public transport network and with strategies to increase use of open areas and walking routes. This will implement key objectives of Healthy Ireland to increase social inclusion, increase physical exercise and improve air quality through reduction of air emissions through the use of public transport and not private cars. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of such a PI in the new Statement of Strategy.

‘H) Tourism Policy
We will work towards achieving the ambitious tourism policy goals set for 2025. These include increasing revenue from overseas visitors to €5billion, growing employment in the tourism sector to 250,000 (from 200,000 currently) and increasing the number of visits to Ireland to 10 million. We will do this through the national tourism policy and through specific measures like the maintenance of the 0% Airport Travel Tax and the retention of the hugely successful 9% VAT rate on tourism related services, providing that prices remain competitive.’

Recommended: A key PI for investment of the capital funding identified above is the integration with the public transport network to offer tourists real alternatives to use of private cars. This will implement key objectives of Healthy Ireland to improve air quality through reduction of air emissions through the use of public transport and not private cars. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of such a PI in the new Statement of Strategy.
‘K) Rural Transport

We recognise the value and benefit of rural transport to many communities, in particular for older people vulnerable to social isolation. We will examine how best to improve integration of services in the rural bus network within regions, including public buses, school transport and the HSE transport networks. A report will be provided to the relevant Oireachtas Committee within 6 months examining how existing routes can be made more sustainable and accessible to the public, the potential for new routes, and reflecting international best practice.’

Recommended: A key PI for the assessment of the sustainability of rural transport includes wider determinates of health and not just financial costs but health gain and loss assessments.

Rural transport routes should be assessed against providing access to health care facilities as part of the increase in Primary Health Care and Community Based Health Care Strategies and ‘A Decisive shift of the Health Service to Primary Care with the delivery of enhanced Primary Care in every Community’ p54. This should include disabled/elderly physical access, safety in using the system and proximity of stops to health care provision. This is a key Healthy Ireland objective of providing accessible health services and addressing inequalities in health. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of such a PI in the new Statement of Strategy.

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‘We also recognise the value and benefit of rural transport to many communities, in particular for older people vulnerable to social isolation. We will examine how best to improve integration of services in the rural bus network, including public buses, school transport and the HSE transport networks. A report will be provided to the relevant Oireachtas Committee within 6 months examining how existing routes can be made more sustainable and accessible to the public, the potential for new routes, and reflecting international best practice.’

Recommended: A key PI for the assessment of the sustainability of rural transport includes wider determinates of health and not just financial costs but health gain and loss assessments. Rural transport routes should be assessed against providing access to health care facilities as part of the increase in Primary Health Care and Community Based Health Care Strategies and ‘A Decisive shift of the Health Service to Primary Care with the delivery of enhanced Primary Care in every Community’ p54. This should include disabled/elderly physical access, safety in using the system and proximity of stops to health care provision. This is a key HI objective of providing accessible health services and addressing inequalities in health. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of such a PI in the new Statement of Strategy.
‘D) Sustainable Transport

Investment in our public transport system will uphold the principles of smarter travel policies. Under the Capital Plan, €100million is being committed to smarter travel and carbon reduction measures, including Greenways, to ensure that the transport sector makes a major contribution to climate change mitigation targets. To aid the development of Greenways, the Minister for Transport will develop national guidelines for Greenway public consultation, planning, and construction to help guide local authorities and agencies.

Recommended: A High Level Goal for the development of the smarter travel includes assessment against wider determinates of health and assessment of community integration and connectivity. This is a key goal of Healthy Ireland as part of increasing physical activity, social inclusion, reducing inequalities and reducing threats to health by reducing air pollution. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of such a PI in the new Statement of Strategy.

General suggestions regarding actions:

- Public funded transport in particularly sensitive ecological areas for tourists to reduce use of cars.
- Sport facility grants to target new and developing sports and not just established sports to encourage wider participation.
- Requirement for Greater multi-departmental co-operation at Planning process of all initiatives and in the formal planning process.
- Greater engagement at ground level to ensure roll-out and implementation of agreed strategies.

All of the following require financial investment to achieve a health gain and reduce health costs:

**SPORT**

- Promotion alcohol free tourist events to de-normalise alcohol use,
- Funding made available as an alternative to alcohol sponsorship,
- Condition of sports funding that all grounds are tobacco free (even open air areas) to de-normalise tobacco
- Inclusion of Parks incorporating play grounds & sports grounds/pitches/tracks etc adjacent to all planned housing developments especially in larger urban areas
- Financial Investment in Providing Recreation and Sports centres operated by Local Authorities in every town (similar to those in Northern Ireland) with subsidised fees to ensure that all socio-economic groups can access the facilities (social inclusion)
- Inclusion of Sports halls and playing fields adjacent to or within the perimeter of planned School developments
• Protected time to be built into the in the curriculum on a weekly basis for Physical Exercise programmes e.g. early morning exercise disco’s before school
• Provision of exercise equipment along popular walkways in every urban area (Used mainly by older persons)

Addresses points under Housing & Homelessness/ Health (obesity & physical activity)/Mental health/Disabled

TRANSPORT

• Increase availability of Electrical Charge points through the country in both urban and rural areas
• Increase the amount of walking lanes/cycle lanes along all urban roads and busier rural roads
• Increase availability of Bike Rental schemes in all urban centres (physical activity)
• Increased rural bus schemes to provide transport to those living in isolated communities (Social inclusion/mental health benefits)

Addresses points under Climate Change (low carbon emissions)

TOURISM

• Improvement in Hygiene Standards in Hostels through inspection and regulation
• Provision of Public Toilet facilities at Beaches
• Improvement in Hygiene Standards at all Public Toilet facilities

Addresses points under Health (protection of health/prevention of disease)

Specific Feedback: HSE Tobacco Free Ireland Programme
Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in Ireland with 5,500 smokers dying each year from tobacco related diseases. Globally this figures is approx 1.6 million deaths per year. Moving towards a tobacco free society will reduce the number of premature deaths from tobacco and will result in healthier, longer and better quality lives for many Irish people. Smoking related deaths are mainly due to cancers, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD) and heart disease.

The Healthy Ireland Framework acknowledges that health is the responsibility of all sectors in society and that sustainable arrangements are needed to give effect to this change. A concerted effort is required to support the continued development of a tobacco free society by 2025 where people can live longer and healthier lives, free from the detrimental effects of tobacco. In order to successfully meet the policy targets a specific focus is required to include the de-normalisation of tobacco use within Irish society, reducing initiation rates, assisting smokers to quit, protecting non-smokers, especially children, from the effects of second-hand smoke, by building on a stable policy and legislative framework. Cross sectoral working is essential to meet the priorities set out in the policy/legislative framework.

Some considerations for the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport:

Sporting events
- Stipulating that any public funding given to sporting bodies going forward is given on the proviso that that organisation commits to implementing a tobacco free campus policy and/or clubs signing up to healthy clubs initiative (reflected in EHS feedback also).

**Transport and Tourism**

- Any tourism event that is focused on family participation should be asked to make the event and promote it as a tobacco free one e.g. Spraoi festival Waterford city, Feile Ceoltais events, Winterval Festival, St. Patricks festival etc.
- Tobacco Free Airports, Ports, train & bus stations would be a helpful PI to include in the new Statement of Strategy and would help place an emphasis on welcoming all tourists to an Ireland striving towards delivery on its cross-governmental Tobacco Free Ireland commitments.

See link below to Tobacco Free Ireland (launched in October 2013) for further information.

Specific feedback from Healthy Eating and Active Living Policy Priority Programme

In Ireland, one in four children and two in three adults are overweight and obese. By the age of 50, four out of every 5 adults in Ireland are overweight. In addition, three out of four adults in Ireland and four out of five children do not meet the Department of Health guidelines for physical activity.

Overweight and obesity are significant risk factors for the development of chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, pulmonary disease and certain cancers.

Physical inactivity is one of the leading risk factors for health and is the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality, estimated to be associated with one million deaths per year in the WHO European region.

In Ireland, physically inactivity is responsible for:

- 8.8% of the burden of disease from coronary heart disease (Europe 5.5%)
- 10.9% of type 2 diabetes (Europe 9.3%)
- 15.2% of breast cancer (Europe 9.3%)
- 15.7% colon cancer (Europe 9.8%)

In 2009, the cost of obesity in Ireland was estimated to be €1.13 billion (Safefood, 2009). It is estimated that physical inactivity in Ireland is costing approximately €1.5 billion per year (WHO, 2006).

The Healthy Ireland Framework, National Physical Activity Plan and forthcoming National Obesity Policy acknowledge that health is the responsibility of all sectors in society and that sustainable arrangements are needed to give effect to the changes required to create a society where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health to their full potential; where wellbeing is valued at every level of society and is everyone’s responsibility.

Recommendation:

A high-level goal of the DTSS strategy should be to support full implementation of the National Physical Activity Plan.

High level strategic plans are needed to encourage, and create environments and communities which support active living through walking, cycling and the use of open public space. The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport is a co-sponsor with the Department of Health for the National Physical Activity Plan. The Programme for Government commitments in relation to Sustainable Travel, Rural Transport and investment in Greenways are welcome in this context. Data from the DTSS Transport Trends Report 2016 demonstrates that private car use remains the primary mode of transport in Ireland though there has been a shift in mode of transport patterns:

- Car share of all journeys 74.4% in 2014 – decrease of 2.1% on 2012
- Walking & cycling share of all journeys 16.4% in 2014 – increase of 1.6% on 2012
- Public transport 5.8% in 2014 – increase of 0.4% on 2012

Only 4% of the 93,594km of regional and local road across the country have on-road cycle lanes.
Recommendation:
A high level goal of the DTTS strategy should be full implementation and continued investment in the *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future strategy and National Cycle Policy Framework*.

Other considerations

*National Obesity Policy* (forthcoming) – focus on prevention of obesity and overweight across the lifecycle. Key focus will be on reducing the impact of the obesogenic environment on children and young people. Obesogenic environment refers to the influences of changes in food availability production, processing and marketing as well as changes in activity, travel and work patterns and recreational activity that contribute to consumption of unhealthy diets and lower levels of physical activity.

Recommendation: a high-level action for the DTTS would be to promote and implement programmes to create:

- a healthier food environment across the public service bodies under its remit, such as Irish Rail, Bus Eireann, Dublin Bus etc, such as ensuring:
  - healthier options are available for purchase on all intercity train journeys
  - calorie posting and healthier vending policies
  - access to free drinking water
  - limit exposure to marketing, sales and promotion of foods high in fat, salt and sugar on routes servicing schools
- stipulate that organisations in receipt of sports capital/sports development funding where children and young people will be a key audience introduce policies that limit exposure to marketing, sales and promotion of foods high in fat, salt and sugar.
- improve staff health and wellbeing, including programmes to promote physical activity and mental wellbeing.

Collated by National Office Health and Wellbeing
On Behalf of Dr. Stephanie O’Keeffe, National Director, Health and Wellbeing